

523A.405 Bond in lieu of trust fund.

1. In lieu of trust requirements, a seller may file with the commissioner a surety bond issued by a surety company authorized to do business and doing business within this state. The bond must be conditioned upon the seller's faithful performance of purchase agreements subject to this chapter. The surety's liability extends to each such agreement executed while the bond is in force and until performance or rescission of the purchase agreement. The aggregate liability of the surety for any and all breaches of the conditions of the bond shall not exceed the penal sum of the bond. To the extent expressly agreed to in writing by the surety, the surety's liability extends to each such agreement subject to this chapter executed prior to the time the bond was in force and until performance or rescission of the agreement. A purchaser aggrieved by a breach of a condition of the bond covering the purchaser's agreement may maintain an action against the bond. If, at the time of the breach, the purchaser is aware of the purchaser's rights under the bond and how to file a claim against the bond, the surety shall not be liable for any breach of condition unless the surety receives notice of a claim within sixty days following discovery of the acts, omissions, or conditions constituting the breach of condition, except as otherwise provided in this section. A surety bond shall not be canceled by a surety except upon a written notice of cancellation given by the surety to the commissioner by restricted certified mail, and not prior to the expiration of sixty days after receipt of the notice by the commissioner. The surety's liability shall extend to each purchase agreement subject to this chapter executed prior to cancellation of the surety bond until the seller has complied with subsection 3.

2. If a seller becomes insolvent or otherwise ceases to engage in business prior to or within sixty days after cancellation of a bond, the seller shall be deemed to have breached the bond conditions for outstanding agreements under this chapter as of the day prior to cancellation of the bond. The commissioner shall mail written notice by restricted certified mail to the purchaser under each outstanding purchase agreement of the seller that a claim against the bond must be filed with the surety company within sixty days after the mailing date of the notice. The surety shall cease to be liable for all purchase agreements except those for which claims are filed with the surety company within sixty days after the date the commissioner mails the notices.

3. If a surety bond is canceled by a surety under any conditions other than those specified in subsection 2, the seller shall comply with all of the following:

a. The seller shall comply with the trust requirements of section 523A.201 for all purchase agreements subject to this chapter executed on or after the effective date of cancellation of the surety bond. In the alternative, the seller may submit a substitute surety bond meeting the requirements of subsection 1, but the seller must comply with section 523A.201 for any purchase agreements executed on or after the effective cancellation date of the earlier surety bond and prior to the effective date of the later surety bond.

b. Within sixty days after the effective cancellation date of the surety bond, the seller shall submit to the commissioner an undertaking by another surety company that a substitute surety bond meeting the requirements of subsection 1 is in effect and that the liability of the substitute surety bond extends to all outstanding purchase agreements of the seller that were executed but not performed or extinguished prior to the effective date of the substitute surety bond, or the seller shall submit to the commissioner a financial statement accompanied by an unqualified opinion based upon an audit performed by a certified public accountant licensed in this state certifying the total amount of outstanding liabilities of the seller on purchase agreements subject to this chapter and proof of deposit by the seller in trust under section 523A.201 of either the amount specified in section 523A.201, including interest as set by the commissioner based on the interest which would have been earned had the funds been maintained in trust, with respect to all of those outstanding purchase agreements or, where applicable, that delivery of merchandise has been made in compliance with section 523A.404. The surety may require such security as is necessary to comply with this section. Upon compliance by the seller with this paragraph, the surety company canceling the surety bond shall cease to be liable with respect to any outstanding purchase agreements of the seller except those purchase agreements with respect to which a breach of condition occurred prior to cancellation and for which timely claims were filed.

4. Section 523A.202 and, to the extent it is applicable, section 523A.206, apply to sellers whose purchase agreements are covered by a surety bond maintained under this section, and section 523A.202 continues to apply to any purchase agreements of those sellers that are not covered by a surety bond maintained under this section.

5. Upon receiving a notice of cancellation of a surety bond, the commissioner shall notify the seller of the requirements of this chapter resulting from cancellation of the bond. The notice may be in the form of a copy of this section and sections 523A.201 and 523A.202.

6. Upon receiving a notice of cancellation, unless the seller has complied with the requirements of this section, the attorney general shall seek an injunction to prohibit the seller from making further purchase agreements subject to this chapter. The attorney general shall commence an action to attach and levy execution upon property of the seller when the seller fails to perform a purchase agreement subject to this chapter, to the extent necessary to secure compliance with this chapter. The county attorney may bring criminal charges under subchapter VII.

7. The surety under this section shall not be owned, under the control of, or affiliated with the seller.

8. The amount of the surety bond shall equal eighty percent of the payments received pursuant to purchase agreements, or the applicable portion thereof, for cemetery merchandise, funeral merchandise, funeral services, or a combination thereof and the amount needed to adjust the amount of the surety bond for inflation as set by the commissioner based on the consumer price index. The seller shall review the amount of the surety bond no less than annually and shall increase the bond as necessary to reflect additional payments. The amount needed to adjust for inflation shall be added annually to the surety bond during the first quarter of the establishment's* fiscal year.

9. With the consent of the purchaser, an existing prepaid purchase agreement with trust-funded benefits may be converted to a prepaid purchase agreement funded by a surety bond provided the seller and the surety bond comply with the following provisions:

a. The amount of the trust funds transferred to the surety company must be at least equal to the full sum required to be deposited as trust principal under the trust-funded prepaid purchase agreement plus all net earnings accumulated with respect thereto, as of the transfer date. Commissions, allowances, surrender charges or other forms of compensation or expense loads, premium expense, administrative charges or expenses, or fees shall not be deducted from the trust funds transferred pursuant to the conversion.

b. The face amount of the surety bond issued on an individual must be no less than the amount of principal and interest transferred for that individual to the surety company, and any supplemental surety bond issued to cover the unfunded portion of the purchase agreement must have a face amount that is at least as great as the unfunded principal balance. The face amount of the surety bond purchased shall not, under the circumstances, be less than the total of all payments made by the purchaser pursuant to the agreement plus all net earnings accumulated with respect thereto, as of the transfer date.

c. The seller shall maintain a copy of any prepaid trust-funded agreement that was converted to a prepaid purchase agreement funded by a surety bond and retain the payment history records for each converted purchase agreement prior to conversion until the cemetery merchandise, funeral merchandise, and funeral services have been delivered.

2001 Acts, ch 118, §32; 2001 Acts, ch 176, §74; 2007 Acts, ch 175, §63, 64

*The phrase "seller's fiscal year" probably intended; corrective legislation is pending